

Higher Economics Question Paper Audio Presentation Transcript

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Hello, my name is Karin Coltart, the subject implementation manager for Business and Economics. In this presentation, I'm going to talk about the structure of a SQA Higher Economics question paper.

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The presentation will take you through what factors are considered when making up a SQA Higher Economics question paper in terms of duration, structure, content, command words and level of demand. The SQA Higher Economics paper is two and a half hours long and asks 90 marks worth of questions. If a centre uses a question paper out of a less than 90 marks for an in-house assessment, the time allowed should be altered.

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If a centre is using an assessment of less than 90 marks or if sitting a 90 mark assessment that is split into several occasions, the overall level of demand may become easier as candidates have less material to revise. On a purely arithmetic model, the SQA Higher Economics paper works out at just over one and a half minutes per mark,

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although not all questions will take the same amount of time to answer. For example, a one mark 'describe a type of unemployment' question takes less time to answer than one mark for 'explain the way in which fiscal policy could be used to decrease unemployment'. In addition, candidates will spend some time reading stimulus material and thinking rather than writing answers.

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These factors should be taken into account when considering an appropriate length of time for an in-house assessment. A SQA Higher Economics paper covers all three areas of study, namely 'Economics of the Market', 'UK Economic Activity' and 'Global Economic Activity'. A SQA Higher Economics paper is made up of two sections, the first section has two items of stimulus material, each with 15 marks worth of questions which can be on any of the three areas of study.

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There should be no more than 11 marks allocated to any one area of study across Section One. Questions in Section One can range from one to a maximum of four marks. The second Section contains three 20 mark questions, each of which covers a single area of study. Questions in Section Two range from two to a maximum of eight marks. In a SQA Higher Economics paper

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candidates can be asked to draw and/or explain a variety of diagrams from the following choices: 'production possibility', 'demand', 'elasticity of demand', 'supply', 'markets', 'costs' and 'circular flow'.

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There's no definitive list of command words that can be used for a SQA Higher Economics question paper. The words listed in the table have all appeared since 2019 and are therefore the ones that are most commonly used.

Words listed in the table: Outline, state, suggest, define, describe, draw, discuss, compare, distinguish, explain.

A SQA Higher Economics question paper aims to have a range of questions that cover different levels of demand so that some questions are accessible to all candidates and some are difficult enough to only be accessible to candidates who would be expected to get an A grade pass.

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The table shows targets, so a candidate who would be expected to be awarded a C grade pass should be able to answer about half the marks in the paper.

Information found in the table: Level of demand. Accessibility: A-type candidates. Approximate percentage of marks: 30%. Approximate number of marks: 27 marks.

Accessibility: B-type candidates. Approximate percentage of marks: 20%. Approximate number of marks: 18 marks.

Accessibility: C-type candidates. Approximate percentage of marks: 50%. Approximate number of marks: 45 marks.

About a third of the marks should be challenging enough so the only candidates who would be expected to get an A grade pass should be able to get those marks. The level of demand of the question can change depending on a variety of factors, such as the wording of the question, the command word being used, the number of marks

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the question is out of, how specific or general the question is, the topic the question is about and the number of possible answers that there could be for a question.

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Candidates need to read each question carefully, as a given number the use of the plural or the use of the singular in a question can indicate how many original points are needed or how many developments can be given. In a 'draw' question, all that is required is the label

diagram itself. In an 'explain' question, the candidates must give a written reason for the change

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in addition to the label diagram, which makes it harder. Top tip: When drawing diagrams, candidates should take about a third of a page for a diagram so that the person marking it can clearly see all the lines and labels.

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In this example, the command word changes. In the 'describe' version, a C grade candidate might give two descriptions and a B grade candidate would be expected to get all three marks. In the 'explain' version, a C grade candidate might get one mark, a B grade candidate might get two marks and an A grade candidate would get three out of three.

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In this example, the command word stays the same, but the number of marks available for the question changes. Often the more marks a question is out of, the more difficult a question is, as a candidate needs to have more knowledge to be able to give a full answer. Similarly, fewer marks in a question can make it easier as less knowledge is required for full marks.

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In this example, the specificity of the question changes. In the first version of the slightly harder question, the question has been tightened to advantages only, which narrows the possible pool of answers. In the second version of the slightly harder question, a specific number of advantages is required, which takes away the opportunity for candidates to give development answers. If only three advantages are given.

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even though a lot of information is given about one of them, only three out of four marks can be awarded. Whereas in the starting question, the candidate could have developed a point about an advantage and/or a disadvantage and gained full marks.

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In this example, the topic of the question has changed. Some topics are considered to be harder than others. For example, candidates often find 'supply side policies' a harder topic than 'reasons for unemployment'. Therefore, the number of marks that might be accessible to a C grade candidate would be fewer in the harder topic. In this example, the possible number of answers for each question has changed.

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There are a great many determinants of demand for a candidate to choose from. For example, 'changes in income', 'price of substitutes', 'price of complementary goods', 'taste', 'advertising', 'population', 'availability of credit', etc.. for the three mark question. Whereas there are three leakages to choose from, i.e. 'imports', 'taxation' and 'savings' for three marks. This makes answering a question that has a wide choice of answer easier than one which has a limited number of correct answers.

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If you want to have a look at examples of marked candidate work and commentaries, you can use this link to go to the SQA Understanding Standard website.

<https://www.understandingstandards.org.uk/Subjects/Economics>

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Thank you for listening. I hope that you found this presentation useful for you.